Tom Hayden on the Vietnam War and revolution (1970)

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Tom Hayden speaks on the Vietnam War, revolution, and the military industrial university complex at the University of California (1970)
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Cambodia Day Committee (Original Recording), 1970
by Yuen, Hoh-Kun
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Description: A live recording of the Laos Day Committee at the Martin Luther King School in Berkeley.

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don't go away we're going to have some gorilla street theater i think that from the very fact that the cambodian government has been overthrown since the laos day committee was created we can draw a very important political lesson in trying to figure out what to do and that lesson is that there is an entire world that is in a state of revolutionary permit things are moving very fast it's no longer possible for us to isolate one event from another and to simply struggle against the war in vietnam or the war in laos where the all that where just three or four years ago the thesis of the cubans and of che guevara in particular that two or three many had to be created where that was seen as a strategic opportunity as something that should be done because the united states was bogged down in vietnam something that should be done in latin america i think now that we see that that strategy of two three many vietnam is becoming a necessity it's not something that we choose to do as something that nixon's expansion of aggression everywhere in the world forces us to see as the only road that is the only way for there to be independence the people of vietnam or laos or cambodia will be now not not with a modest change in american policy but with a sweeping and total change american foreign domestic policy i think that that's what is weighing

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i think that that's what is weighing very heavily on people i think that we've spent a long time since nixon came to office engaged in kind of a debate in our head about where we stood where things were at and how heavy the crisis facing ourselves was going to be there were a lot of people on the left who said that the war in vietnam was going to be ended because it wasn't in the interest of capitalism to destroy itself over there such a small country that rational men would get into office in washington or rational men would direct washington from the financial centers of the united states to cut out the war in vietnam so as to restore some stability i think that nixon has put that to rest and that now it should be uh clear forevermore that the united states has a commitment to empire and that as the pillar of a worldwide empire the united states has to defend every possession every piece of territory in the world and that there will not be a withdrawal from one

country until there is a solution throughout all of southeast asia asia and perhaps other continents that makes it very hard to for us to decide what to do because we're living in a situation where revolution is as total as imperialism that what we must change is as broad as the empire that stands against us if you simply look at just the papers you see that we need a lot more flags than the flags on the stage around us because we're engaged in a battle

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us because we're engaged in a battle that involves many countries and if you look at the sources of the oppression you see the united states involved not in vietnam laos and cambodia but in thailand where it was revealed this week that this university the university of california has had contracts for the last four years making this university the coordinator of all counter insurgency research and activities in the united states for the country of thailand if you look at the nation of korea just using the word korea probably sends people back into the 1950s our ordinary assumption is to believe that the korean war is over korean war is not over there is no way to resolve the conflict in korea until it's carried further korean war was put on the back burner something that many people perhaps and the american government would like to do with vietnam and find they cannot but just recently in korea political districts in south korea very much like the people who 12 14 years ago formed the viet cong in south vietnam have issued a proclamation a manifesto and statement very similar to the one that announced the beginning of armed struggle in south vietnam proclamation from revolutionaries in south korea that they were again going to resume a military as well as a political struggle against the government in seoul we don't even know about it

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new york times new york times did not dance to princess you have to read the black panther paper to find out about it if you read that paper to find out about korea you can also read it to find out about the panthers and see that the war is not even abroad the war is at home same war as being waged against the black panther party in this country that was waged against the central committee for instance of the vietnamese during the so-called peaceful and legal period in south vietnam in the 1950s when 22 out of 23 members of the central committee were killed the same kind of battle in order to look at it that way it becomes almost necessary to see that even though it feels like we are at peace we're already involved in a war we are only living in peace at the expense of people who are fighting we're only living at peace because the options have not closed for us and other people are fighting for us vietnamese are fighting for us had to allow fighting for us and i mean that in a concrete way if they were not they would not ask dr cornwall or other people to come into their liberated zones to write articles to go back and tell the american people they would not have bothered bringing people to vietnam southeast asia to show conditions there to us because they know that remote at this auditorium is from the cave where the legitimate government of laos is now centered remote as that connection is between the cave and the auditorium

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cave and the auditorium in some people's minds there just will be no liberation and no security for any small country until the american empire is taken apart dismantled and buried and that will require struggle by people inside of the united states i have two particular suggestions about action that i wanted to make and then hope that we can turn this into some kind of action meeting and these suggestions really have to do with berkeley because i'm very interested in berkeley and i think that we all know that uh berkeley has been the center of uh the beginning of the struggle against the vietnam war several years ago in fact we had a vietnam day committee i understand and evidently there's a repetition of that process implied by forming the kind of committee that's been formed to have this educational program tonight there's no there's no doubt to people in berkeley that all of us feel that we have a lot of international interest and responsibility but i think that we could see our role more clearly we saw ourselves as an international city what i mean by that is a state of mind more than something to do with territory at this point a state of mind but a state of mind that would allow us to

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a state of mind that would allow us to see things in a very different way and act in a very different way see i also think that we should see ourselves as a people's park as we should turn around a lot of our conceptions in the people's park struggle we saw the university as being the dominant institution in berkeley that was taking this land using it for no good reason people should have the land back to struggle against the university to get it back but in that struggle i think we began to see ourselves as being residents of a new kind of people's park that should spread not be located on a vacant lot off the avenue but should spread as a state of mind and take root all over the community and outside of berkeley and in that concession the university and its personnel became weeds that had to be cleared out of people's parks we were not asking the university for the right to use the land but we were asking what was the university with its war machinery and with its agricultural machinery doing other people's parts that will give you a more aggressive state of mind a state of mind that laid claim to territory a state of mind that had no particular regard for private property or for institutions that had taken it from the indians and original owners and give you a state of mind that said that it's necessary to see this territory as ours and to remove uh those who have settled here to impose a dictatorship with all their machinery a dictatorship on us and other people around the world now if if we saw berkeley not just as a city where an anti-war movement could get going or a city where we could recruit a lot of people

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recruit a lot of people to go on anti-war marches or engage in anti-war activity which is obviously true if you look at it from one angle but if we saw berkeley as an international city we would have a different attitude about what goes on in berkeley what's happening at the draft board in berkeley what's happening with roxy in berkeley what's happening was the university which is the center of the pentagon's nuclear establishment which has people on its payrolls from here to los alamos a university which contracts for all research related to thailand and god knows what else here this university is probably the most important university in the united states in perpetuating the war machinery the i think it's the most important i think it's at the top of the pyramid i think that's why charles hitch was sent here look at who the president of this so-called university is uh he is not an educator right he's not an administrator of uh educational functions he is a man who comes from the department of defense from the rand corporation a man who sits on the asia foundation which dispenses cia funds and engineer of the institute for defense analysis he is a man who was part of the brain trust under mcnamara in the pentagon and who has more than any other person been the engineer of a very necessary part of american foreign policy which is the integration and the coordination of a number of major universities with the pentagon i mean a number of years ago we were shocked when we found out that these michigan state university professors

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michigan state university professors were doing this so-called research in south vietnam like modernizing the police department for uh tien improving police administration and uh the shotgun is worn off but the process continues that's what hitch is all about that's hitch's job it's what hitch does he engineers that all right if he has been named by a board of regents to be the president of the university i suggest that we figure out what the university is not from textbooks about universities and not from schools of education which talk about education while they set up school systems in thailand and saigon but that we've learned from practice that we learned from the practice of the university what the university is that we learned from where its money goes where its personnel goes what its thrust is we learn from that and not from an occasional classroom where somebody speaks in radical language we learn from the thrust of the university what it's about and what we see if we do that is that we are not sitting near a university at all here in berkeley in an international city we're sitting on the outskirts of something that is more like the pentagon or an american embassy it's true look at the buildings look at the new buildings that are going up what do they remind you of walls of learning remind you of uh create an atmosphere in your mind of being at peace with books do you feel when you walk

on campus that your mind is being deepened by everything that you see and take in now the university is building buildings that look like fortresses university is escalating the number of police on his faculty the number of police

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on his faculty the number of police in so-called graduate student roles the number of police who are so-called students by other students in classes and the number of people just generally vacantly wandering around sprawl plaza and the avenue looking for you and me it's escalated why has it escalated is it escalated because the university wants to predict protect the academic freedom of the students and faculty and do you really think that the university is being militarized because it wants to protect the free exchange of ideas it's not the free exchange of ideas that's at stake in the university it's the free exchange of contracts it's the free exchange of contracts between the university that's what has to be protected in fact this has already been pointed out to us and the words are in our head you remember when bobby steele and other people from the panthers came here last year during the black studies struggle when some scientists were having a struggle with their consciences in quali ballroom it was a convocation about the responsibilities of social science while outside there was a struggle over black studies byron steele said that black studies are all right but the only black studies that will be accepted at the university of california are black towns or insurgency studies and the only reason the only reason that the police are on campus is not to protect the students from each other but to protect the basic program of the university which he called studies in genocide that's what the university does now if you say that you're a member of an international city which is trying to

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which is trying to maybe have a flag of its own so that people can speak on the koreans and the cubans and the vietnamese and the laotians and the cambodians and the people of berkeley if you're talking about people who are fighting people who are struggling if you see yourself as part of a world in which your countrymen are just as much just as much as in vietnam as here in which your citizenship is international and later for the united states then you have to drop all of these conceptions we have to drop these conceptions of being american citizens citizens of the united states who pay taxes and vote and are responsible to the united states and more particularly here the conception that we are students of the university not students of the university or citizens we are either accomplices in what is going on or we are enemies of the united states and when that basic decision when that basic division becomes clear then you see the university not as a center of academic freedom that has to be guilted that has to be left untouched but a pillar of imperialism that has to be destroyed that's a whole state of mind it's not a pleasant thing and it's not just something to uh get worked up about because to develop this state of mind means people have to go through a lot of changes all of us it's very difficult to go into that university with all of what you have been told about education or to sit in this community near the university with all that you've been told about education and suddenly whitehall get out and see the university and all of its essential ugliness it's easier to look about at the pentagon or think about the pentagon in your mind pentagon military guns violence genocide

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pentagon military guns violence genocide there's no liberal imagery that floats into our minds when we think about the pentagon like there is when we think about that institution here in berkeley the university of california so if you look at it that way then the most concrete aid that we can give in this international struggle is to make it impossible for the war functions of the university to go on now that's a strategy how that how that is important is because the university is just one of five or six schools mit harvard the university of michigan you know the names which are essential for the conduct of this war that is we have a real power here because the power of these universities just like the power of everything else in the united states has been centralized so that at the top of the educational structure where it ties in with the pentagon there are only five or ten schools where the money is the manipulators are the researchers are the apparatuses for

carrying on the total military program of the united states government it's here so people who are here people who can harass and attack and stop a war machine from functioning in berkeley are people who are putting that war machinery into a very very deep crisis it's like when after the fsm and some other struggles seymour martin lives at one of the ace counter insurgency experts domestically leaves the faculty here he goes to harvard thinking he'll get peace of mind and just that harvard shuts down but he has nothing to do there that struggle which has shut down harvard which has shut down michigan

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harvard which has shut down michigan just university of michigan just a couple of weeks ago is a struggle over whether or not the top educational machinery that's necessary to the war effort is going to be allowed freely and with immunity to conduct itself to continue that's a struggle that we can do something about and it's not counter opposed to those who want to march on the bank of america because that escalates the struggle in a sense by teaching us who really has stakes in asia and and why the united states is not going to get out and this strategy is not counterposed to those people who want to expand the numbers of people in the anti-war movement by going to the working class or by going to so-called other constituencies but this strategy that i'm suggesting is one that says the numbers are present they've been present since 1965 but the people who are concerned about the war in vietnam and concerned about internationalism have not yet really seen themselves as part of a war but rather to still see themselves as university students and taxpayers and protesters and it's that change that's required a change that will shut down the arteries so that they cannot produce roxy officers so that they cannot produce studies on how to expand the police force in thailand so that they cannot conduct the nuclear research or administer it from here so that they can't do the things that they're doing these are the matters that people who live in berkeley have real power over and this is the way i think that our seriousness is finally tested whether we have any kind of struggle with the immediate institutions oppressing the people of the third world right here in our own backyard or whether we continue to zigzag looking either for more people or for a higher level of intellectual

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or for a higher level of intellectual consciousness find more people and having a higher political and intellectual consciousness is good it's good but the thing that gets more people the thing that gets better consciousness is a fighting movement that proves to people that it is possible to defeat the war makers in the university and shove them out of berkeley and have people waiting for them in stanford in ann arbor in madison and cambridge anywhere they go so that they won't be able to do business there that i think is a much different kind of struggle than we've had in the anti-war movement so far now i recognize that people uh may think this is too narrow or crazy or whatnot so i have a section a second simpler suggestion that is that we we have uh constituted some kind of machinery for developing our internationalism in berkeley and we need relations with the whole international struggle we need a foreign ministry we need an international affairs department of the berkeley movement and what that would mean concretely is a group of people will take on a whole range of tasks one of them is continual education on the streets in the classrooms and everywhere about what's going on in the world putting on posters selling a black panther paper giving out information through forums like this one but continually increasing the educational awareness so that we don't come to the question of laos five years after we should have come to it secondly sending people from berkeley and the bay area to other countries in activities like the vents ramos brigade or in trips to the third world so that some kind of

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to the third world so that some kind of direct contact between people here in the bay area and the third world is continually established and deepened so the people bring back information a body of people that would do all of these educational activities would not simply be just an abstract body but would be a permanent body to call actions and to organize people there should be no lecture hall in the university where there's a military social scientist lecturing without somebody leafleting and raising questions of him inside the classroom there

are many things of that nature that can be done in small groups to make these people pack up and get out of the universe and some kind of stuff machinery in berkeley a committee that serves the people of berkeley in this tremendous need for us to coordinate ourselves with the international struggle and to see what we're doing as part of a general universal total breakout of people all over the world into a new world is very necessary and i think that it can be organized in the near future so that things like this are no longer ad hoc or episodic because revolution is worldwide and the revolution is permanent [Applause] you

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